

Middlebury Natural Foods Cooperative
Board of Directors Meeting
December 15, 2010
Approved 1/26/11

Board Members Present: Kristin Bolton (arrived 7:50), Ilaria Brancoli Busdraghi, Ross Conrad, Francisca Drexel, Mary Gill, Kate Gridley, Jay Leshinsky, Michelle McCauley, Karen Miller-Lane, Tam Stewart.

Members Absent: Kevin Lehman

Others present: Susan DeWind (Staff Liaison), Glenn Lower (General Manager).

Board Monitor: Tam

Call to Order: Jay called the meeting to order at 6:31 pm.

Member Business: In addition to the concerns emailed by Kristin prior to the meeting, Jay reported a request by James Maroney that the Co-op, along with Regional Planning, show “Bloom”, a film about Champlain Lake pollution. Kate said this film comes from the Lintelac Foundation and Crea Lintelac might be willing to speak. The board supported the idea and Glenn said he would pass this on to Karin for a notice in the February newsletter. Francisca brought up the previous issue that King Arthur flour is not local and should not be labeled as such. Also Ben Gleason would like to be a “producer of the month” but has not been given a spot.

Approval of Minutes: On a motion by Kate, seconded by Karen, the minutes of November 17 were approved unanimously as amended.

General Manager’s Report: The Board unanimously approved a request from Glenn to loan \$10,000 to the Cooperative Fund of New England (CFNE) with 3% interest for 2 years on a motion by Michelle, seconded by Ross. Kate requested a report of the status of other MNFC loans and the percentage of money in loans as opposed to staying in bank accounts.

The Co-op will be getting a proposal later this month for a carbon footprint assessment from AgRefresh of Burlington to compare with Springhill’s plan.

EL4 Monitoring Report: Glenn reported “in Compliance” on all sections. Ross asked about the increase in governance. CDS Consulting has raised their contract rate to \$5,550, up from \$5,400. In addition to CBLD seminars, Jay consults monthly and Glenn can as well but has not recently. NCGA co-ops are primary users with the best outcome being learning policy governance and CBLD 101. Their library is very useful and programs can be tailored to individual co-op needs. The renewal of the contract at the new rate was unanimously approved on a motion by Michelle, seconded by Tam.

BDC - Self Evaluation: Kate asked the Board how they felt about the new format. Consensus was it worked well, giving an overall picture, though there are some redundant questions and was too long. Limiting comments to only those answers given a 3 or lower would help tighten it up; answers of 4 or 5 are equal really in approval and

don't raise red flags of things needing work. The question came up, if there are redundant policy questions does that mean there are too many policies and are they good ones.

Several items discussed: Linkage had many comments. While the Board does many of the "usual" ways to link with member-owners, there is strong support to set new goals to do more. Regarding GM evaluation for meeting Ends, the Board accepted the report, but will dedicate more time to it next year. Jay said the self-evaluation is a process review on how the Board allocates its time and looks at policies. This is a good step to being more efficient. It was agreed that the new Board member packet be given to all Board members. A mid-year retreat is supported but there is also the concern of overworking Board members. This will be discussed at the January retreat. Michael Healy says the MNFC Board has more committees than most co-ops. Glenn wanted the Board to be aware of how their work on Ends – especially healthy food and a push for organic– filters down to staff. The Co-op now is more focused on "local" rather than organic which the Board should keep in mind.

Linkage: Tam presented the latest version of a new Board Bulletin Board. Karin Mott has been working with Tam on its design. It will fill the big wall over the shopping carts in the front entry giving shoppers the message this is a different kind of store. It will have more uniform photos of directors (which Kate offered to take), brochures, minutes, a board suggestion box and "take away" information sheets. Ross suggested titling it "Your" Board of Directors.

Buying Criteria Committee: There was discussion about the Buying Criteria Committee work on the issue of free glutamic acid. Dr. Jeff Wulfman brought this to the attention of the committee and they have been researching it. Since the food industry removed MSG from food they have been using this acid instead. While it occurs naturally in some foods, the man-made processed form has been the subject of sometimes conflicting research linking it to various unhealthy side effects. This flavor enhancer is in more than 70 processed foods that MNFC carries, especially in products for vegetarian and vegan diets. There are few alternatives available now. While shoppers rely on MNFC to "filter out" unhealthy foods, given the number of products and differing study results, the committee and the Board are concerned about the negative impacts of removing all these products from the shelves. It has raised the issue of defining "natural" and "artificial". Realizing how complicated this issue is, the Board consensus was that while these products will stay in the store for now, the Co-op at least owes it to shoppers to educate them about this issue and offer resources for them to learn more. The committee will be drafting an article for the newsletter with resource links to be reviewed by Kira.

Education: Jay said consideration had been given to the issue of the retreat facilitator being able to participate in the discussion. CDS is not able to provide a facilitator for the date chosen for the retreat so Kristin will take over that role. Jay will consult with Michael Healy before the retreat and share the self-evaluation with him.

Ross, who will not be at the retreat, asked that the Board include consideration of two issues he is concerned about for future planning. He asked that the Board focus on possible events that are likely to happen that will have a major impact on the Co-op. He feels the current national economy is unstable and collapsing. How this would impact the

Co-op should be included in future planning; business as usual is not the wisest choice. The other issue he wants to be considered is the Farm to Plate movement. A report is due soon about what the food system needs. Storage facilities should be the type that do not use energy resources, such as root cellars. What the Co-op does should be permanent, concrete and serve the community in the long term.

Slaughter House Update: Mary reported that Dottie Nelson has continued working on the issue of certification for humane treatment of animals in slaughter houses. Many farmers support the idea of having certification for standards implemented. Farmers also would like to have the possibility of being allowed to do their own slaughtering on the farm as a way to avoid stress on animals as well as lowering costs. How to certify farm-based slaughtering as well as the question of what qualifications a person needs for certification remain unanswered for now.

Next Meeting: Webinar presentation by Ilaria and retreat follow-up.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:42pm on a motion by Kristin seconded by Tam with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted by Susan DeWind